Bay Area
Smart Growth Scorecard

2006

Cover photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

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Executive Summary

The San Francisco Bay Area will add a million new residents by 2020. What this means for the region depends largely on where and how this growth occurs.

On average, Bay Area cities score 34%, with only one-third of the needed policies to achieve smart growth.

The region can accommodate growth while making its cities and towns a better place to live. This approach is called smart growth. It requires directing new growth into already-urbanized areas, protecting farms and natural areas, creating walkable neighborhoods, and revitalizing downtowns.

To learn how well the region is doing at pursuing smart growth, Greenbelt Alliance has undertaken a landmark assessment of the planning policies of all 101 cities and nine counties of the Bay Area. These policies provide the blueprints for how the region will grow in the future. Strong planning policies are critical to a vibrant, livable region.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* measures policies. It does not measure on-the-ground reality. For instance, the region's densest cities may not score highest on density, because their policies may not be strong enough to ensure that new development is also dense. Political will is also important to achieving smart growth, as it ensures that good policies translate into good development. The *Scorecard* does not measure political will. The *Scorecard* evaluates only policies, which create the framework to make smart growth possible.

Evaluating Cities and Counties

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* evaluates cities and counties separately, to reflect their separate roles.

To ensure a healthy environment and high quality of life, cities should be the sites of compact, lively, and pedestrian-friendly development, especially in their downtowns and near transit stations.

Counties also have a critical role to play in fostering smart growth by channeling development to the cities; protecting natural resources, open space, and farmland; and providing transportation options between cities.

City Results

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* reveals that across the region, Bay Area cities could be doing much more to support smart growth. Of 101 cities, only 17 earn scores of 50% or more, out of a possible 100%. On average, cities score 34%, with only one-third of the needed policies to achieve smart growth.

Preventing Sprawl with Urban Growth Boundaries

There are 78 cities in the Bay Area that are not encircled by water or other cities, and so should have urban growth boundaries. Of these, 25, or about one-third, have strong boundaries. The lack of boundaries in many areas leaves a significant amount of the region's open space at risk of sprawl development.

Photo: Galen Rowell

Protecting open space and improving the Bay Area's quality of life requires good policies to guide growth. Today, Bay Area cities and counties are doing only a third of what is needed to achieve smart growth.

Making Sure Parks Are Nearby

Many Bay Area cities should be doing much more to ensure their residents live near parks. Of 101 cities, only 31, about one-third, require parks to be within walking distance of every resident. Without this standard, open space may be inequitably distributed, leaving many residents unable to easily enjoy a neighborhood park.

Creating Homes People Can Afford

One of the Bay Area's greatest needs is for homes that people can afford. Many Bay Area cities do have policies supporting the creation of affordable homes. Fifty-nine of 101 cities have inclusionary policies, which require affordable homes to be included in new residential developments. However, many cities do not have strong enough inclusionary policies or are lacking other necessary policies, and the average score regionwide is 36%. In this critical area, cities are falling short.

Encouraging A Mix of Uses

The Bay Area's cities are doing better at allowing mixed-use development than they are in any other smart growth policy area. Of the region's 101 cities, 79 allow a mix of uses downtown and near transit stations, though some require special permits. Mixing shops, jobs, and homes enlivens neighborhoods and helps people to get from place to place without having to drive.

Encouraging Density in the Right Places

Bay Area cities are not doing well at encouraging or requiring density even in the most appropriate places: downtown and near transit. On average, cities score only 29%, the second lowest regional average of all the policy areas. Without increasing density in the right places, the region will fail to accommodate growth while protecting open space and providing homes people can afford.

Requiring Less Land for Parking

Cities in the Bay Area are doing very little to encourage better land use by reducing parking requirements. The regionwide average score is 26%, the lowest of any policy area. By keeping parking requirements high, cities are missing the opportunity to build more homes and commercial space.

Defining Standards for Good Development

With an average score of 32%, Bay Area cities are doing only one-third of what they could be to use development standards to make streets and sidewalks inviting. However, most cities do earn at least some points, and five cities earn scores of over 75%: Windsor, Walnut Creek, Sonoma, Livermore, and Oakland.

County Results

Bay Area counties on the whole are doing somewhat better than cities. On average, they score 51%, meaning they are doing half of what they could do to promote smart growth.

Preserving Agricultural Land

Bay Area counties can significantly improve their agricultural zoning ordinances. They score only 49% on average. County ordinances that allow rural land to be split into smaller parcels, or allow multiple houses on each parcel, represent a latent threat to the greenbelt. San Mateo's model agricultural ordinance should be imitated by lower-scoring counties including Santa Clara, Marin, and Sonoma.

Conserving Natural Resources

Bay Area counties average 48% in enacting conservation policies to protect creeks, trees, and steep slopes. Often counties have taken a first step by stating the importance of these resources, but few have specific ordinances to ensure their protection.

Offering Transportation Choices

The region's counties vary widely in their transportation planning, policies, and investment, with an average regional score of 41%. Santa Clara

On average, Bay Area counties score 51%, meaning they are doing half of what they could do to promote smart growth.

Managing Growth

In many cases, Bay Area counties are doing better than cities at preventing sprawling growth. Seven counties have adopted strong growth management policies intended to prevent urban development on greenbelt lands, though only three are voter-approved ordinances. Counties' average growth management score is 51%.

Permanently Protecting Open Space

Counties perform better in open space and parkland policies than in any other policy area, with an average score of 60%. Only two counties in the Bay Area, Solano and Napa, have not yet established a public agency for open space acquisition and preservation.

County leads the way with significant transit funding. Solano and Napa lag because they do not have transportation sales taxes that could provide funding for local transit.

The Way Forward

These scores are low. In general, Bay Area cities and counties are doing only a fraction of what is needed to ensure smart growth.

But that can change. For every policy area, there is a city or county that can guide other jurisdictions as they seek to improve.

The future of the entire region is at stake.

Introduction

The San Francisco Bay Area is famous for its high quality of life, which springs from the region's spectacular natural surroundings and its diverse, vibrant cities. The region's quality of life attracts entrepreneurs and skilled workers, fueling innovation and powering the economy.

But the Bay Area is not without problems. Already, housing costs are some of the highest in the nation; the majority of residents cannot afford the median-priced home. Traffic is consistently a major concern in regional polls.

The region is feeling the pressure of growth—and there is still much more growth to come. An additional million people will live in the Bay Area by 2020, bringing the region's population to eight million.

The Bay Area's challenge will be to accommodate that growth in a way that does not reduce the region's famous quality of life.

If the region continues to grow the way it has for the past several decades, it will fail the challenge. Sprawling, haphazard, low-density development on the region's edge will pave over working farms and natural areas, create long commutes, clog freeways, and pollute the air and water.

There is a different way to grow. A smarter way.

We can direct growth inward, not outward. We can take advantage of existing infrastructure to keep costs down. We can invest in existing cities and revitalize historic downtowns. We can create more homes that people can afford, near where they

Photo: East Bay Regional Park District

need to go, and give them more options about how to get around. We can protect open space, and make sure people live near parks so they can enjoy that open space.

In recent years, the Bay Area's cities and counties have started along this new path toward smart growth.

But how well are they doing? Are they making sure that growth will make the region better instead of worse? Are they adopting enough good policies to make a difference?

The Smart Growth Scorecard

Greenbelt Alliance surveyed the entire region to find out. The result, the *Bay Area Smart Growth Scorecard*, is the first report of its kind. It measures how well each of the region's 101 cities and nine counties are doing at creating policies to meet smart growth goals.

The survey was created in conference with local planning professionals, to create a realistic, achievable list of policies that Bay Area cities and counties could adopt to promote smarter growth.

One million more people will live in the Bay Area by 2020; by adopting strong smart growth policies, cities and counties can accommodate this growth while keeping the region a great place to live.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* scores cities and counties differently, because each has a unique role to play in guiding growth. Cities, as the managers of local growth, should be the sites of compact, lively, and pedestrian-friendly development. Counties, meanwhile, should channel growth to the cities. They should also protect the county's natural resources, open space, and farmland, and provide a variety of transportation options between cities.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* focuses on policies, rather than the situation on the ground now. For instance, instead of measuring a city's current downtown density, the *Scorecard* is concerned with the density a developer could build downtown today. The policies in place today will affect the growth that occurs in the future.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* is a look at the region's future, and a blueprint for making it better.

City Scorecard

These before-and-after images of Gilroy's Caltrain station area use computer visioning to illustrate how smart growth can make the region's cities and towns more livable for all residents.

Cities have a great deal of power to do smart growth, because they directly oversee the development that occurs within city boundaries. The vision the city establishes in its general plan guides its growth. The zoning ordinances and other regulations in the municipal code directly regulate building and have the force of law.

The policies and ordinances established by cities directly affect the day-to-day experience and quality of life of residents. But cities' actions also have impacts far beyond their boundaries. In a regional economy and housing market, cities' decisions not to grow can push development elsewhere, into other cities and out onto farms and natural areas.

Cities can adopt smart growth policies to accommodate new growth within defined boundaries. This makes cities more attractive places to live and protects the greenbelt. The *Smart Growth Scorecard* evaluates the extent to which each city is doing its part.

Surveying Cities

Numerous city planners contributed valuable time to answer *Scorecard* survey questions. Greenbelt Alliance researched any questions that went unanswered, then gave planning department staff the opportunity to review and correct the information. Greenbelt Alliance relied on the answers cities provided and did not independently verify responses.

The scores represent a snapshot in time. Many cities have policies or ordinances in draft form, but these were not considered since they had not been enacted. Bay Area cities were first contacted in January 2005 and invited to participate. The scores reflect city policies adopted by May 2005, though some follow-up questions were resolved up until January 2006.

When scoring responses, every effort was made to give credit to cities for established policies. When a range of possibilities was permitted, or when a broad policy was applied in a variety of ways on a case-by-case basis, scorecard researchers attempted to determine what was the typical case. In general, any interpretation of policies was resolved by allocating the highest relevant score in that policy area.

Scoring Cities

The *Scorecard* evaluates cities in seven policy areas: growth boundaries, park proximity, affordable housing, mixed-use development, density, parking, and development standards. Each policy area includes several questions to evaluate the strength of a city's policies. The questions are weighted based on their importance in guiding better growth.

Photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

The maximum score for each city policy area is 40 points. The maximum score for each city, across all seven policy areas, is 280 points. All scores are reported as a percentage of possible points.

Cities may be exempted from questions in two policy areas. Cities surrounded by water or other urban areas are exempt from the growth boundaries question, and cities without a transit station are exempt from all transit-related questions (e.g., questions about density or mixed-use development in transit station areas).

In evaluating the policy areas of mixed-use development, density, parking, and development standards, survey questions about specific zoning focused on two areas: the city's downtown and the half-mile radius around transit stations. Cities should focus growth in these core areas to create compact, walkable neighborhoods near jobs and services.

Overview of Policy Areas

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* measured cities' support for smart growth in seven policy areas. Below is a brief description of each policy area.

1 Preventing Sprawl with Urban Growth Boundaries

Has the city established a boundary beyond which it will not grow or permit development, to contain urban growth and prevent it from sprawling into the countryside? Is this boundary geographically specific, codified in ordinances, controlled by voters, and long-lasting?

2 Making Sure Parks Are Nearby

Does the city have a policy that ensures every resident can walk to a park or green space? How close to residents must green spaces be?

3 Creating Homes People Can Afford

Does the city require that some portion of large-scale housing developments be affordable to lower-income residents? What percentage of the housing development must be affordable, and to which income levels? Do cities have other important policies to ensure affordable housing?

4 Encouraging A Mix of Uses

Does the city allow residential, commercial, or even industrial activities to occur together in the same building or in adjacent buildings in the city's downtown and around its transit station? Is mixed-use development allowed automatically, or only after obtaining a special permit?

5 Encouraging Density in the Right Places

How many homes per acre do the city's development codes allow in the city's downtown and near transit stations? Does the city allow high-density development in these areas by setting high or no maximum densities? Does the city prevent extremely low-density development by establishing density minimums?

6 Requiring Less Land for Parking

How much parking is required for developments in the downtown and near transit stations? Are automatic parking reductions available for low-income or senior housing, or if developments share parking with neighboring buildings? Do cities encourage developers to "unbundle" the cost of parking from the cost of development?

7 Defining Standards for Good Development

Does the city have urban design standards in its downtown, around transit nodes, in neighborhood commercial centers, and throughout the city so that development contributes to attractive, pedestrian-friendly public spaces?

Photo: Jessica Aloft

City policies can focus new growth in existing cities, protecting surrounding hillsides and farmlands.

Regional Results

Across the region, Bay Area cities could be doing much better at planning well for growth. The average score for all cities is 34% (Table 1), meaning that they are only taking about one-third of the needed steps to ensure good growth and a healthy environment. Only 17 of 101 cities earned even half of possible points (Table 2). Most cities earned total scores of between 11% and 50%.

There are seven policy areas that determine whether cities are planning well for growth: growth boundaries, park proximity, affordable housing, mixed-use development, density promotion, parking reduction, and development standards.

As Table 1 illustrates, cities' average scores in most policy areas range between 26% and 36%. This means that most cities need to strengthen their policies significantly to ensure that growth happens in a way that makes them better places to live.

One area where the region's cities are doing relatively well is in allowing mixed-use development. Creating a mix of residential and commercial activities brings round-the-clock activity to streets and puts residents closer to shops and jobs, creating safer, more vibrant, and more complete neighborhoods.

But in most policy areas, Bay Area cities are not doing well. More than half the region's cities lack urban growth boundaries to keep development from sprawling out onto surrounding farms and natural areas. More than half also lack park proximity policies, which ensure that every resident lives within walking distance of a park. Cities are also not doing enough to reduce parking requirements and increase density, to create walkable neighborhoods and accommodate growth sustainably.

All these policies are reasonable and within reach; they are all being done well by some cities in the region.

Table 1:
Bay Area Cities' Average Policy Scores

POLICY AREA	REGIONAL AVERAGE
Growth Boundaries	29%
Park Proximity	27%
Affordable Housing	36%
Mixed-Use Development	79%
Development Density	29%
Reduced Parking Requirements	26%
Development Standards	32%
Overall	**34%**

Table 2: **Bay Area Top-Scoring Cities**

CITY	SCORE
Petaluma	70%
San Jose	69%
Napa	65%
Santa Rosa	65%
Windsor	61%
Pleasanton	58%
Rohnert Park	58%
Mountain View	57%
San Rafael	56%
Morgan Hill	56%
Sebastopol	55%
Novato	55%
Benicia	53%
Milpitas	53%
Hayward	52%
Livermore	50%
Walnut Creek	50%
San Mateo	49%
San Francisco	49%
Richmond	49%

RANK	CITY	SCORE
1	Petaluma	70%
2	San Jose	69%
3	Napa	65%
3	Santa Rosa	65%
5	Windsor	61%
6	Pleasanton	58%
7	Rohnert Park	58%
8	Mountain View	57%
9	San Rafael	56%
10	Morgan Hill	56%
11	Sebastopol	55%
12	Novato	55%
13	Benicia	53%
13	Milpitas	53%
15	Hayward	52%
16	Livermore	50%
17	Walnut Creek	50%
18	San Mateo	49%
19	San Francisco	49%
20	Richmond	49%
21	Dublin	48%
21	Palo Alto	48%
21	Pittsburg	48%
24	Cotati	47%
25	Berkeley	47%
26	San Ramon	46%
26	Fairfield	46%
28	Millbrae	46%
29	Gilroy	45%
30	St. Helena	44%
31	Albany	44%
32	Sonoma	44%
32	Newark	44%
34	San Leandro	43%
35	Oakland	42%
36	South San Francisco	41%
37	Cupertino	41%
38	Campbell	41%
39	Fremont	40%
40	Healdsburg	40%
41	Rio Vista	39%
42	Sunnyvale	39%
43	Hercules	38%
43	San Carlos	38%
45	Half Moon Bay	37%
46	Suisun City	37%
47	Alameda	37%
48	Union City	36%
49	Emeryville	35%
50	Oakley	35%
51	Pleasant Hill	34%

RANK	CITY	SCORE
52	Lafayette	33%
53	Vallejo	33%
54	Yountville	32%
55	Concord	31%
56	Brentwood	31%
57	Burlingame	30%
58	Larkspur	30%
59	Santa Clara	29%
60	Corte Madera	28%
60	Mill Valley	28%
62	Brisbane	28%
63	Clayton	28%
64	El Cerrito	28%
65	Colma	27%
66	Calistoga	27%
67	Tiburon	26%
67	Vacaville	26%
69	Antioch	26%
70	Portola Valley	25%
71	Redwood City	25%
72	San Bruno	24%
73	American Canyon	24%
74	San Pablo	24%
75	Menlo Park	23%
76	Belmont	23%
77	Martinez	22%
78	Sausalito	21%
79	Cloverdale	21%
80	Pacifica	20%
81	Los Gatos	20%
82	Los Altos	18%
83	San Anselmo	18%
84	Pinole	17%
85	Ross	17%
86	East Palo Alto	17%
87	Foster City	15%
88	Los Altos Hills	15%
89	Danville	14%

Bay Area City Smart Growth Policy Scores

Score:

- 50–70%*
- 31–49%
- 0–30%

*No city scored above 70%

RANK	CITY	SCORE
90	Daly City	14%
91	Saratoga	14%
92	Fairfax	13%
92	Moraga	13%
94	Woodside	13%
95	Monte Sereno	13%
96	Piedmont	12%
97	Dixon	11%
98	Orinda	10%
99	Atherton	3%
100	Belvedere	0%
100	Hillsborough	0%

City ranks are based on scores before rounding, so some cities whose scores appear tied are not actually tied.

SONOMA

NAPA

SOLANO

MARIN

SAN FRANCISCO

CONTRA COSTA

ALAMEDA

SAN MATEO

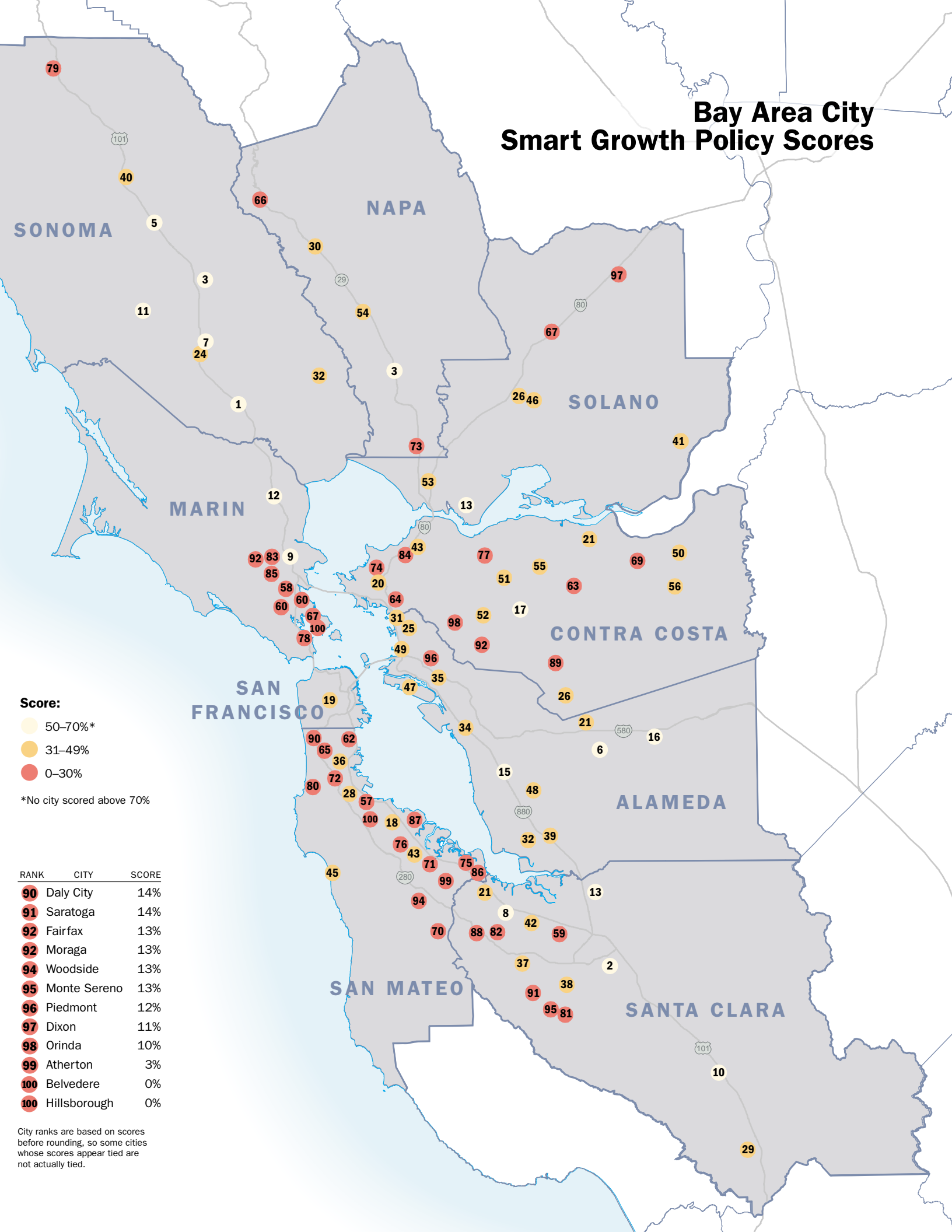SANTA CLARA

Petaluma's strong smart growth policies earned it the highest score of all 101 Bay Area cities.

Selected City Profiles

The following profiles illustrate how a few cities earned their scores.

Petaluma

Petaluma is the top-ranking city, with a total score of 70%. Petaluma's experience illustrates that through strong local leadership in planning for growth, a city of moderate population can create a livable town and help protect the greenbelt.

Petaluma is the second-largest city in Sonoma County and the oldest city between San Francisco and Eureka. Its location on the Petaluma River and near prime farmland made it an industrial and agricultural center early on. In the 1950s, highways brought rapid growth to Petaluma's edges, and local leaders started to realize that this threatened the city's fiscal and economic vitality. In 1972, Petaluma adopted an urban limit line to prevent growth from sprawling outside the city.

Over the following decades, planning efforts built on Petaluma's history

and architectural character to create a vibrant and economically thriving downtown. In 2003, Petaluma adopted a plan to channel development into the geographic heart of the city. As part of this process, the City adopted a type of zoning known as a "Smart Code," which pays attention to how buildings relate to the street, rather than their uses. This approach encourages mixed-use development and makes neighborhoods more inviting for pedestrians.

Petaluma is doing a good job at planning for growth. To do even better, it should reduce its high parking requirements, establish a minimum density in its downtown, and create design guidelines for areas outside of downtown. These steps would further encourage the revitalization of its downtown, and help the rest of the city to grow in an attractive and inviting way.

San Jose

San Jose is the only city of the Bay Area's three biggest that made it into the top 10. It is in second place, with a total score of 69%.

San Jose has taken a consistent approach to growth, adopting key policies though not always making them as strong as they could be. For instance, the city requires that parks be within a ½-mile of all residents, but not within a ¼-mile. It also allows a mix of land uses (e.g., homes, shops, and jobs) in the downtown with no permit, but requires a permit for mixing uses near transit.

San Jose does get a perfect score for its voter-adopted urban growth boundary. It also earns the top score, 73%, for parking standards. Low parking requirements enable developers to build more homes on a given amount of land, and help make places better for pedestrians. San Jose requires only one parking space per apartment downtown. Its parking requirements are automatically

reduced for low-income housing, senior housing, and developments near transit. Many cities could enliven their downtowns by matching San Jose's parking requirements.

San Jose illustrates the success a city can have through consistent effort across policy areas. The good policies in place are already transforming San Jose from an epicenter of sprawl to a more livable, walkable community.

San Francisco

San Francisco ranks 19th overall with a score of 49%. In light of San Francisco's compact, walkable neighborhoods, this may be a surprise, but the scores are based on policies, not on existing development.

San Francisco lacks some important policies, although citizen commitment and local leadership have compensated to create good results in city neighborhoods. Policies the city needs include a parks radius requirement (saying parks must be within a certain distance from every resident), a required minimum density for development, and good development standards.

San Francisco ranks near the top in the other relevant policy areas, including parking and mixed-use development.

San Francisco is a good example of a city with compact, walkable development near transit, but its policies are not as strong as they could be.

City Results By Policy Area

Cities' performance in each of the seven policy areas evaluated reveals what is and isn't working about how Bay Area cities are planning for growth.

1 Preventing Sprawl with Urban Growth Boundaries

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

Has the city established a boundary beyond which it will not grow or permit development, to contain urban growth and prevent it from sprawling into the countryside? Is this boundary geographically specific, codified in ordinances, controlled by voters, and long-lasting?

Table 3:
Top Cities—Growth Boundary Policies

CITY	SCORE
Livermore	100%
Napa	100%
Novato	100%
Petaluma	100%
San Jose	100%
Sonoma	100%
Windsor	100%
Cotati	98%
Dublin	98%
Milpitas	98%
Pleasanton	98%
San Ramon	98%
Santa Rosa	98%
Regional Average	**29%**

Received no points: 53 (non-exempt) cities
Exempt: 23 cities surrounded by water and/or other cities are exempt from this question and not shown on this list.

What are the results?
Cities in the Bay Area are generally either doing very well or very poorly at controlling development with urban growth boundaries. There are 78 cities in the Bay Area that should have urban growth boundaries; of these cities, only 25, or about one-third, have them.

Six exemplary cities score 100% (Table 3) for having urban growth boundaries that completely encircle the cities, last at least 20 years, are part of the municipal code, and can only be changed by a vote of the people. Another six cities score 98% because their policies are part of a general plan but are not codified in a zoning ordinance.

At the other end of the scale, two-thirds of eligible cities (53 of 78) score 0%. Some of these cities do have some measures in place to preserve open space, such as zoning ordinances, hillside protection ordinances, or a statement that they accept county-based urban limit lines. However, these methods may not stop sprawl development and may leave cities vulnerable to changes in county government. None protects open space from shifting political and economic pressures as securely as a long-lasting, city-established urban growth boundary.

Why do the results matter?
Adopting an urban growth boundary, to define where growth should and should not occur, is one of the most important decisions a city can make. Urban growth boundaries prevent sprawl and protect the scenic landscapes essential to the Bay Area's quality of life.

Urban growth boundaries also encourage the compact and efficient development of lands inside the city. By redirecting growth into areas already served by roads and schools, urban growth boundaries reduce the costs of new construction for taxpayers. They help focus growth, and the economic vitality it brings, in the center of existing communities.

Photo: East Bay Regional Park District

By adopting urban growth boundaries, voters can define where growth should and should not go. This protects open space and maintains distinct communities.

What policies count toward the score?
To earn most of the points in this policy area, cities must have established urban growth boundaries that are specific boundaries encircling the city (value: 28 points). Twenty-three cities are exempt because they are already completely surrounded by water or neighboring cities. Two cities—Antioch and Pittsburg—adopted boundaries in 2005 through developer-sponsored initiatives; these boundaries include so much vacant land they score no points.

The *Scorecard* awards more points to longer-lasting growth management policies (value: 20+ years: 4 points; 15–19 years: 2 points). These are less vulnerable to changing political conditions and growth pressures, providing certainty to landowners.

To be strong, specific, and enforce-able, the boundary should also be voter-controlled (value: 6 points) and should be a city ordinance (value: 2 points) rather than a general plan policy (value: 1 point).

2 Making Sure Parks Are Nearby
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

Does the city have a policy that ensures every resident can walk to a park or green space? How close to residents must green spaces be?

What are the results?
As with urban growth boundaries, Bay Area cities are either doing very well or very poorly at ensuring their residents live near parks. Of 101 cities, only 31, about one-third, have park proximity policies. Six cities require parks to be within a ¼-mile radius of every resident, scoring 98% (Table 4), and 23 cities require a ½-mile radius. No cities get a perfect score, as no city codifies the policy in its zoning code.

More than two-thirds of Bay Area cities do not have park radius standards. Many of these cities do, of course, have parks. Some cities identify possible park locations in their general plans or aim to provide a certain number of park acres per

Table 4:
Top Cities—Park Proximity Policies

CITY	SCORE
Milpitas	98%
Oakley	98%
Petaluma	98%
Rio Vista	98%
San Mateo	98%
Suisun City	98%
Regional Average	**27%**

2nd place: 22 cities tied, scoring 88%
Received no points: 70 cities

1,000 residents. However, without a radius standard, open space may be inequitably distributed throughout the city, leaving many residents unable to walk to a park.

Some cities claim that their city's small size means people always have green space nearby, outside the city or in existing city parks. However, only a policy can ensure that this will continue to be true as the city grows. Other cities claim they lack this policy because they are "built out" and have no large vacant areas. But even small lots can make "pocket parks" and playgrounds. More importantly, cities are constantly being built and rebuilt; a park proximity policy ensures that new parks will be created as the city changes over time.

Why do the results matter?
Green space within walking distance improves a neighborhood's quality of life. It also reduces pressure to build out in the greenbelt, because families with abundant, accessible parkland are less likely to move out of urban areas in search of the bigger yards found in new edge developments.

What policies count toward the score?
The *Scorecard* awards most of the points in this area based on whether cities have a policy specifying that a park shall exist within a certain radius of all city residents (value: 25 points). The bulk of the remaining points depends on the policy's requiring a specific radius (value: ¼ mile: 13 points; "walking distance" or ½ mile: 9 points; ¾ mile: 7 points; one mile: 4 points). The radius should be a city ordinance (value: 2 points) rather than a general plan policy statement (value: 1 point).

3 Creating Homes People Can Afford
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

Does the city require that some portion of every housing development be affordable to lower-income residents? What percentage of the housing development must be affordable, and to which income levels? Do cities have other important policies to ensure affordable housing?

What are the results?
On average, Bay Area cities' policies on affordable housing are better than they are on anything but mixed-use development. But the average regional score on affordable housing policies is only 36% (Table 5).

Corte Madera has the highest score, 88%, for its strong inclusionary ordinance, its housing trust fund, and

Photo: Jessica Aloft

Requiring parks to be within walking distance of all residents helps ensure that people have nearby green space to enjoy.

Table 5:
Top Cities—Affordable Housing Policies

CITY	SCORE
Corte Madera	88%
Novato	80%
San Rafael	80%
St. Helena	80%
Cotati	75%
Newark	75%
Pleasanton	75%
Rohnert Park	75%
Berkeley	73%
Brentwood	73%
Walnut Creek	73%
Regional Average	**36%**

Received no points: 28 cities

its jobs-housing linkage program, though it does not require 25% or more of tax increment redevelopment financing to be dedicated to affordable housing. San Rafael, Novato, and St. Helena tie for second place, with scores of 80%. It is important to note that the highest-scoring cities may not be producing the most affordable housing. As it is in other policy areas, political will is important to ensure the implementation of good policies.

Of 101 Bay Area cities, 59 have some form of inclusionary housing policy, requiring a percentage of new housing to be affordable. These cities differ in how much must be affordable: 10 require 20% or more of new homes to be affordable; 26 require 11–19%; and 23 require only 5–10%.

These cities also differ in the income levels they target: low-income (51–80% of Area Median Income, AMI) or very-low-income (≤50% of AMI). Most require development to be affordable to low-income renters (50 cities) and buyers (37 cities). Some go further, requiring that development be affordable to very-low-income renters (32 cities) and buyers (16 cities).

A number of cities have adopted other smart affordable-housing

policies as well. Thirty-seven cities have housing trust funds. Nineteen have a jobs-housing linkage program, requiring that new commercial development fund housing. Sixteen cities devote 25% or more of their redevelopment tax-increment financing to an affordable housing fund.

Photo: South County Housing Corporation

Including homes that are affordable to a range of incomes is an important part of making cities better places to live.

Unfortunately, in spite of the many available policy options for providing affordable housing, 28 Bay Area cities received a score of 0%.

Why do the results matter?
Bay Area home prices are among the highest in the nation. With the median price of a single-family home at $712,940 in December 2005, the average home is out of reach for 88% of the region's residents. The lack of homes that people can afford in existing cities pushes development pressure out onto greenbelt lands, lengthens commutes, and worsens traffic. Sound affordable housing policies can create more affordable homes in already-developed areas.

Inclusionary housing policies are especially valuable because they ensure that as new homes are created,

a consistent proportion of these are affordable to lower-income residents.

What policies count toward the score?
Housing is considered affordable if it costs one-third of a household's income. Cities receive points in this area if they have effective inclusionary housing policies (value: 10 points) that require a percentage of new housing to be affordable (value: up to 9 points). That housing should be targeted to both renters and buyers with incomes that are low (51–80% of AMI, value: 1 point each) or very low (≤50% of AMI, value: 2 points each).

Cities should also have an affordable housing trust fund (value: 5 points). Housing trust funds create a dedicated revenue source (typically from real estate transfer taxes or development fees) for affordable housing. City grants from these funds can make projects eligible for state and federal financing and help jumpstart construction.

The *Scorecard* awards additional points to cities with a jobs-housing linkage ordinance (value: 5 points). Jobs-housing linkage ordinances require new commercial or industrial development to provide housing for

the businesses' future workers, either by directly building the housing or by donating to an affordable housing construction fund. This helps housing creation keep up with job creation.

Finally, for cities that have redevelopment agencies, they should direct 25% or more of their redevelopment tax-increment financing to an affordable housing fund (value: 5 points). As cities redevelop neighborhoods, they receive increased property taxes from the improved neighborhoods; this increase can then pay back the funds used to construct these new neighborhoods. This is called tax-increment financing. Since redevelopment also raises housing prices, the state of California requires 20% of this tax increment to be set aside for affordable housing. Cities can go beyond this minimum requirement to set aside 25% or more.

4 Encouraging A Mix of Uses
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

Does the city allow residential, commercial, and, where appropriate, industrial activities to occur together in the same building or in adjacent buildings in the city's downtown and around its transit station? Is mixed-use development allowed automatically, or only after obtaining a special permit?

What are the results?
Bay Area cities are doing better at allowing mixed-use development than they are in any other smart growth policy area. An impressive 33 cities—about one out of three—allow mixed-use development in their downtowns and near transit stations without requiring a special permit, earning a perfect score of 100% (Table 6). Another 46 cities—almost

Table 6: **Top Cities—Mixed Use Development Policies**

33 CITIES SCORE 100%:

Albany	Oakley
American Canyon	Petaluma
Brentwood	Pinole
Campbell	Pittsburg
Clayton	Richmond
Dublin	Rio Vista
El Cerrito	San Carlos
Gilroy	San Francisco
Hayward	San Mateo
Hercules	San Pablo
Larkspur	San Rafael
Livermore	Sausalito
Morgan Hill	Sebastopol
Mountain View	Vallejo
Napa	Walnut Creek
Novato	Windsor
Oakland	

Regional Average: 79%

Received no points: 9 cities

half—allow mixed-use development downtown and near transit, but require a permit in one or both areas, earning scores of 85–93%. Ten lower-scoring cities only allow mixed-use development downtown, not around a transit station. Only nine cities allow no mixed-use development, for a score of zero.

Why do the results matter?
Mixed-use development, which puts homes, shops, and offices next to one another or in the same building, is key to creating livable neighborhoods. Old-fashioned Main Streets have mixed-use development, with stores on the ground floor and homes or offices above. This mix of uses enables people to get to work, go

Photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

This before-and-after computer visualization of Livermore's First Street illustrates how mixed-use development can revitalize a neighborhood. Putting homes above street-level stores provides needed housing and makes streets more lively and walkable.

shopping, and do errands without having to get in the car for every trip. Mixing uses around bus lines and train stations also makes it easy for more people to use transit; the fares they generate make the system more efficient and effective.

The opposite of mixed-use zoning is exclusionary zoning, in which an entire area is devoted solely to one use, such as a large housing tract or strip-mall retail center. Exclusionary zoning requires driving to get from place to place, making walking and biking difficult and often dangerous.

What policies count toward the score?
The majority of the points in this policy area go to cities that allow adjacent residential and commercial uses in downtowns and around transit stops (value: 15 points in each area). Allowing mixed-use develop-ment automatically (value: 5 points in each area) gets more points, since it is more effective than requiring special zoning permits (value: 2 points in each area).

5 Encouraging Density in the Right Places

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

How many homes per acre do the city's development codes allow in the city's downtown and near transit stations? Does the city allow high-density development in these areas by setting high or no maximum densities? Does the city prevent extremely low-density development by establishing density minimums?

What are the results?
Bay Area cities are not doing well at encouraging density (with no or high density maximums) or requiring it (with density minimums), even in the most appropriate places: downtown and near transit. On average, cities score only 29%, the second-lowest regional average (Table 7).

Only three cities earned scores of

Photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

These before-and-after computer-generated images of San Jose's North First Street show how density can create a more vibrant place. Dense development around transit makes riding transit easy for the people who live and work around the station.

75% or higher for their development density policies—Albany, Fremont, and Concord. Sunnyvale also requires one of the region's highest minimum densities, 450 homes or dwelling units per acre (du/acre) in part of its downtown. However, most cities have no density minimums,

Table 7: **Top Cities—Development Density Policies**

CITY	SCORE
Albany	78%
Fremont	78%
Concord	75%
San Jose	73%
Sunnyvale	70%
Union City	70%
Hayward	63%
Los Altos	60%
Vallejo	58%
Foster City[T]	55%
San Rafael	55%
Regional Average	**29%**

Received no points: 3 cities
[T] Exempt from questions regarding transit stations.

and only 21 cities have minimums of 15 du/acre or higher. Eight Bay Area cities set a high maximum at or above 70 du/acre; density maximums lower than this serve to discourage, rather than encourage, density. Thirteen cities have no maximum density (though they may limit it in other ways).

The high-scoring cities are not the cities that are currently the most dense on the ground; for example, San Francisco and Oakland do not rank in the top 10 in adopting strong density policies, but they are among the densest cities in the region. Density policies help set the growth pattern for the future and are an essential step in preventing sprawl.

The region's cities do not all need to become as dense as San Francisco and Oakland, but adding additional stories to buildings in downtowns and near transit can accommodate growth while revitalizing these areas.

Why do the results matter?
The Bay Area will be home to an additional million people by 2020. Accommodating that growth, while keeping the region's quality of life high, protecting open space, and providing homes that local people can afford, will require high-density development in urban areas. High-density development is especially appropriate in downtowns and around transit stations, where it can revitalize city cores and make transit work for more people.

What policies count toward the score?
Cities scored the most points if, around downtowns and transit stops, they set high or no density maximums (value: 8 points in each area, sliding scale) and high density minimums (value: 8 points in each area, sliding scale). To be as strong as possible, these maximums and minimums should be part of a zoning ordinance (value: 2 points) instead of only a plan or a policy document (value: 1 point).

6 Requiring Less Land for Parking
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

How much parking do cities require in the downtown and near transit stations? Are automatic parking reductions available for low-income or senior housing, or if developments share parking with neighboring buildings? Do cities encourage developers to "unbundle" the cost of parking from the cost of development?

What are the results?
Cities in the Bay Area are doing very little to encourage better land use by reducing parking requirements. The regionwide average score is 26%

Cities often require large amounts of parking for new development. Reducing these requirements creates opportunities for more mixed-use development and walkable places.

Table 8: **Top Cities—Policies to Reduce Parking Requirements**

CITY	SCORE
San Jose	73%
Berkeley	70%
South San Francisco	70%
San Francisco	68%
Oakland	65%
Fairfield	60%
Petaluma	58%
Napa	55%
Pittsburg	53%
Martinez	50%
Santa Rosa	50%
Regional Average	**26%**

Received no points: 8 cities

(Table 8), the lowest of any policy area. Eight cities score 0%.

However, a few cities are doing well. San Jose scores the highest, 73%, for its low parking requirements, with automatic reductions for low-income housing, senior housing, and housing near transit. San Jose and 11 other cities require approximately one space per home downtown. Two cities—Berkeley and San Francisco—require less than one parking space per apartment for apartment buildings downtown and do not require additional parking for grocery stores added to these build-

ings, but they do not have as many automatic reductions for parking as San Jose does.

A surprisingly small number of cities join San Jose in providing automatic parking reductions. Fifteen cities automatically reduce requirements for low-income housing, 36 do so for senior housing, and 35 do so when buildings are arranged so they can share parking. Lowering parking requirements for these uses helps developers meet the region's serious need for low-income and senior housing.

Only five cities—Berkeley, Petaluma, San Mateo, San Carlos, and Walnut Creek—encourage developers to separate parking from the cost of a lease or rental price, ensuring that the true cost of parking is apparent and is not subsidized.

Why do the results matter?
Parking takes up a tremendous amount of space in cities. Often, half of a developed parcel may be devoted to parking. Land used for parking could otherwise be used for homes or businesses. When developers are not held back by high parking requirements, they can build more homes or larger commercial areas on the same amount of land.

Photo: Jessica Aloft

Downtowns and transit areas should be walkable places where people can travel without cars. Low parking requirements bring buildings closer to one another and make streetscapes more pedestrian-friendly.

What policies count toward the score?
Cities earn points by requiring as few parking spaces as possible for buildings that are downtown or near transit (value: up to 6 points per development per location, awarded based on two hypothetical developments: an apartment building with 25 two-bedroom apartments, and the same building with a 5,000-square foot grocery on the ground floor).

Additional points go to cities that automatically reduce parking requirements for low-income or senior housing (value: 3 points each). Credit also goes to cities that automatically reduce requirements when parking lots are shared or when buildings are near transit (value: 3 points each). The *Scorecard* also rewards cities that encourage developers to separate the costs of parking from rent or lease costs, so that parking expenses are paid by car owners (value: 4 points).

7 Defining Standards for Good Development
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 40

Does the city have urban design standards in its downtown, around transit nodes, in neighborhood commercial centers, and throughout the city so that development contributes to attractive, pedestrian-friendly public spaces?

What are the results?
Once again, scores are low. On average, Bay Area cities score 32% (Table 9); they are doing only one-third of what they could in using development standards to make streets and sidewalks inviting. Most cities earn at least some points, although five cities receive no points.

Photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

These before-and-after computer-generated images of San Jose's Eastridge Mall show how good development standards, such as requiring buildings to extend to the sidewalk and requiring parking and garages to go behind buildings, make streets walkable and attractive.

Five cities earn scores of over 75%: Windsor, Walnut Creek, Sonoma, Livermore, and Oakland. These cities have good standards that address sidewalks and streetscapes in both commercial and residential areas, particularly in downtown and transit areas. These standards include requiring sidewalks on both sides of the street, prohibiting cul de sacs, and requiring commercial buildings to come all the way up to the sidewalk.

Most cities, 73 of 101, have at least one visually illustrated design guideline. Sixty-seven cities require that no building setback exist in the downtown area. This ensures that buildings extend to the sidewalk, which encourages window-shopping and makes the street interesting for pedestrians. Fifty-three cities also require sidewalks on both sides of a new residential street; this makes it easier and more pleasant for people to walk.

Table 9: **Top Cities—Development Standards Policies**

CITY	SCORE
Windsor	90%
Walnut Creek	85%
Sonoma[T]	82%
Livermore	80%
Oakland	80%
Yountville[T]	74%
Sebastopol	73%
Calistoga[T]	65%
San Jose	63%
Mountain View	60%
Napa	60%
Regional Average	**32%**

Received no points: 5 cities
[T] Exempt from questions regarding transit stations.

However, cities are not doing well at laying out streets in ways that help pedestrians get around. Only 16 cities prohibit cul de sacs in residential development, and few cities require a grid street layout in either residential or commercial development.

Cities can create more walkable neighborhoods, like this one in Petaluma, by adopting development standards that require sidewalks on both sides of the street. Cities can also require streets to be in a grid pattern without cul de sacs, which helps shorten distances for people on foot.

Cities may already have an established street and sidewalk layout, but rebuilding could change that. Large redevelopment projects and reconstruction after earthquakes have created entirely new street grids in the Bay Area. Even major infrastructure can change, and a long-range vision of a livable, pedestrian-friendly streetscape ensures that change is for the better.

Why do the results matter?
Urban design affects the quality of life within a city. Buildings shape public space the way that walls shape buildings. Together, details like the location of parking lots, the arrangement of streets, and the alignment of buildings define the shape of a city; they determine whether it is inviting and walkable, or an unwelcoming place for people. Good urban design standards bring many different developments together to create attractive places.

What policies count toward the score?
The *Scorecard* weighs whether cities include diagrams in zoning ordinances to communicate design guidelines effectively and shape development (value: 3 points).

Cities' scores improve if, in the downtown, near transit, and in neighborhood centers, they require parking to go behind buildings (value: 1–2 points), require buildings to extend to the sidewalk with no setback (1–2 points), and make "build to" lines that building fronts must touch (value: 1–2 points). These policies help to create well-defined streets and walkways.

In commercial or mixed-use areas outside of downtown, there are several ways to enhance the pedestrian experience. Cities earn more points by encouraging sidewalks on both sides of the street (value: 2–3 points), and encourage new streets to follow a grid pattern (value: 1–2 points), since that makes areas easier to navigate and often creates the shortest line between two points. Encouraging that on-street parking be provided (value: 1–2 points) helps reduce the size of off-street parking lots.

In residential areas, cities earn more points when they encourage sidewalks on both sides of the street (value: 2–3 points) and encourage new streets to follow a grid pattern (value: 2–3 points). Cities score higher when they discourage cul de sacs, which can extend the distance pedestrians must walk (value: 1–2 points). Finally, cities should encourage that garages go behind houses (value: 1–2 points) and discourage "snout houses" with garages sticking out the front (value: 1–2 points). This helps make the street a place for residents and pedestrians instead of cars.

For maximum points in each area, these standards should be specified in a zoning ordinance rather than a policy document.

City Scorecard Analysis

Why do some cities score high and others score low? There are a few demographic and geographic factors that help predict cities' performance: population growth rate, population size, household income, and distance from a major metropolitan area (Table 10).

Though in some cases, these factors are correlated with cities' performance, they do not determine performance. It is city leadership that matters.

Population Growth

Faster-growing cities perform better than their slower-growing counterparts in certain policy areas. Faster-growing cities are more likely to have urban growth boundaries, standards for park proximity, affordable housing policies, and urban design standards for development. These policies are all especially important when cities are first being developed.

However, the region's fastest-growing cities are still not doing well overall, averaging only 39% over all policy areas. If fast-growing cities improve their policies to guide that growth, they will see rapid results and significant benefits. For instance, inclusionary housing policies, which ensure that some new homes in every new development are affordable, are most effective in fast-growing areas.

Table 10: **Factors Correlated With Cities' Policy Performance**

| | | AVERAGE SCORES | | | | | | | |

Population

	AVERAGE POPULATION (2003)	OVERALL	GROWTH BOUNDARIES	PARK PROXIMITY	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	DEVELOPMENT DENSITY	PARKING REDUCTION	DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
Highest Population	172,048	43%	33%	35%	43%	85%	44%	38%	39%
Higher Population	44,645	40%	41%	43%	42%	83%	28%	28%	32%
Lower Population	21,437	29%	13%	20%	25%	86%	25%	21%	31%
Lowest Population	6,650	25%	29%	10%	34%	61%	18%	18%	27%

Population Growth

	AVERAGE GROWTH RATE (1999–2003)	OVERALL	GROWTH BOUNDARIES	PARK PROXIMITY	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	DEVELOPMENT DENSITY	PARKING REDUCTION	DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
Fastest Growth	58%	39%	40%	43%	39%	79%	28%	26%	39%
Faster Growth	18%	41%	43%	36%	48%	83%	33%	30%	36%
Slower Growth	8%	30%	13%	17%	30%	73%	27%	29%	28%
Slowest Growth	1%	28%	8%	14%	27%	81%	28%	20%	26%

Distance From Major Metropolitan Area

(Major metropolitan areas include San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose)

	AVERAGE MILES	OVERALL	GROWTH BOUNDARIES	PARK PROXIMITY	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	DEVELOPMENT DENSITY	PARKING REDUCTION	DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
Closest	8	34%	24%	23%	30%	81%	33%	28%	27%
Closer	17	30%	5%	22%	36%	76%	27%	24%	28%
Farther	25	32%	28%	20%	33%	74%	30%	22%	25%
Farthest	50	42%	47%	43%	45%	83%	25%	30%	47%

Median Household Income

	AVERAGE INCOME (1999)	OVERALL	GROWTH BOUNDARIES	PARK PROXIMITY	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	DEVELOPMENT DENSITY	PARKING REDUCTION	DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
Highest Income	$122,822	22%	18%	24%	22%	55%	19%	14%	18%
Higher Income	$74,340	39%	36%	28%	38%	90%	35%	23%	33%
Lower Income	$61,511	36%	23%	29%	32%	88%	29%	31%	35%
Lowest Income	$48,116	41%	40%	27%	51%	82%	32%	36%	41%

Total Population
Large cities are somewhat more likely to have growth boundaries, park proximity standards, affordable housing ordinances, and pedestrian-friendly development guidelines.

The region's largest cities do relatively well at allowing high density development and lower parking requirements in their downtowns and near transit. However, there is still plenty of room for improvement, as even the largest cities receive, on average, less than half of the available points in density and parking standards.

incomes have the worst average score, 22%, of any grouping of cities.

Wealthy Bay Area towns are failing their residents and the region. They are not keeping development within growth boundaries. They are less likely to allow mixed-use development or have pedestrian-oriented development standards. They require, instead of discouraging, low-density development with high amounts of parking. And they do not require that new development include affordable homes.

planning for growth. Examples already exist right here in the Bay Area; local cities are making each of these policies work. It is simply a matter of learning from one another, and taking the steps to adopt a full set of smart growth policies.

Bay Area cities need to do this now. The region is growing fast and there is no time to lose. The policies that guide growth in each city will determine the future of the entire region.

No matter how big a city is, how well-off it is, or where it is, it can do smart planning for growth.

Distance From Major Metropolitan Area
Cities farthest from their respective metropolitan center (San Francisco, Oakland, or San Jose) tend to have somewhat stronger growth policies. This is especially true for growth boundaries, park proximity standards, affordable housing policies, and strong development standards.

These distant cities most likely developed as discrete towns. Petaluma and Napa, the first- and third-place cities overall, were originally established as regional agricultural centers. In recent years, many of these towns have intentionally strengthened their historical character, and in the ensuing planning processes, they have adopted smart growth policies.

Cities closer to metro areas can adopt smart growth strategies to maintain their character, rather than becoming bedroom communities without a distinct identity.

Household Income
In a striking trend, cities with the highest median household incomes have the weakest growth policies. In fact, cities with the highest median

All Bay Area towns have a responsibility to accommodate a growing population in a way that preserves the region's quality of life. At the very least, the region's wealthiest towns should be doing this as well as other towns are. But currently, towns with fewer resources are doing a better job at creating walkable, vibrant downtowns with good development standards. Wealthy towns are not doing their part; but they can, and they should.

The Key Factor: A Commitment to Good Growth
Ultimately, demographic and geographic factors are not the strongest predictors of which cities have strong smart growth policies. Cities large and small, distant and central, and rich and poor received high smart growth scores. The key factor in a city's smart growth score is the work done by the city planning staff under the leadership provided by the City Council. That means that ultimately, it is up to residents and their elected leaders to commit to good growth.

This is good news. It means that, no matter how big a city is, how well-off it is, or where it is, it can do smart

County Scorecard

The primary role of counties on growth issues should be to channel growth to the cities, facilitate transportation between cities, and protect open space, natural resources, and farmland.

County general plans and zoning codes regulate development on unincorporated county land. But unlike cities, which should encourage appropriate development within their jurisdictions, counties should discourage development on county land. This helps direct growth into cities and prevents the fragmentation of open space.

Counties also have the power to levy sales taxes for open space preservation and transportation projects. This enables them to fund land acquisition and protection, and provide more transportation options between towns.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* examines how well counties are using their power to promote smart growth.

Scoring Counties

Each county policy area has 20 total points possible. Scores are reported as a percentage of possible points.

The county section of the *Scorecard* is the result of an extensive review of county general plans and other policies, adopted county ordinances (including zoning, development and subdivision codes), and expenditure plans for county divisions and special districts. Greenbelt Alliance

With strong policies, counties can protect creeks, trees, and hillsides, and preserve farmland and natural areas.

reviewed these publicly available documents between September 2005 and February 2006, then consulted staff of the appropriate agencies for clarification and interpretation. Every effort was made to obtain and evaluate the most up-to-date policies, ordinances, plans, and budgets. When agency staff could not be reached, the final scorecard represents the most favorable interpretation of the publicly available information.

San Francisco was evaluated as a city and was not included in the county analysis.

Overview of Policy Areas

The *Smart Growth Scorecard* examines county support for smart growth in five policy areas.

1 Managing Growth

Has the county established a boundary around cities beyond which it will not permit development? Is this boundary geographically specific, controlled by voters, and long-lasting?

2 Permanently Protecting Open Space

How committed is the county—institutionally and financially—to the well-planned acquisition of open space, parkland, and farmland conservation easements?

3 Preserving Agricultural Land

How well do the county's agricultural zoning ordinances protect prime agricultural land from being converted into non-agricultural uses and from being fragmented by development?

4 Conserving Natural Resources

Does the county have adequate policies in place to protect its natural resources, particularly its creeks, trees, and steep hillsides?

5 Offering Transportation Choices

Has the county passed a sales tax, or other taxes, to finance transportation improvements? If so, is the county using this spending to improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation choices, rather than spending it on roads and highways? Does the county have a program to fund transit-oriented development?

Regional Results

Bay Area counties are doing better than cities at enacting strong growth management policies, although they, like cities, could still do much more. Overall, the region's eight counties (not including San Francisco) scored 51% (Table 11). To effectively deal with growth and enhance the region's quality of life, counties need to make their smart growth policies about twice as strong as they are now.

Bay Area counties as a whole are strongest in open space protection, where on average they earn a score of 60%. Sonoma County earns the only perfect score in any county policy area for its open space preservation policies.

Transportation choices are a weak policy area for the region. Although some counties have strong transportation policies, particularly Santa Clara and Alameda, three counties—Sonoma, Napa, and Solano—score only 10% or less. Growth management is another area of poor performance for counties. Four counties—San Mateo, Santa Clara, Sonoma, and Marin—score below average in this area.

County Results By Policy Area

On average, counties are doing about half as well as they could be. In each policy area, counties have significant room for improvement in order to prevent sprawl and promote livable communities.

1 Managing Growth
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 20

Has the county established a boundary around cities beyond which it will not permit development? Is this boundary geographically specific, controlled by voters, and long-lasting?

What are the results?
Overall, Bay Area counties have a regional average score of 51% on growth management policies (Table 12), with four counties earning less than 50%.

Seven of eight counties have policies intended to prevent urban development on greenbelt lands outside their cities. However, their effectiveness varies greatly, splitting the counties into two distinct tiers. The four higher-scoring counties—Napa (90%), Alameda (75%), Contra Costa (75%), and Solano (65%)—have growth management policies established through voter-approved ordinances. Lower-scoring counties, including Marin (40%), Sonoma (30%), and Santa Clara (30%), have only general plan policies or map designations to manage growth. San Mateo scores 0% as the only Bay Area county without any effective growth management policy. While the San Mateo County General Plan does establish an "urban-rural boundary" around existing cities, it permits development at urban densities on rural lands.

While no Bay Area county has all the essential components of effective growth management, Napa County comes closest. Measure J, adopted by voters in 1990, freezes zoning and use regulations for all lands in a mapped Agriculture, Watershed and Open Space District and a mapped Agricultural Resources District until 2021. The measure's unparalleled longevity makes it an effective barrier against greenbelt development and provides a strong incentive for planners and developers to channel growth into existing towns. Measure J is also exemplary in that only voters can amend the boundaries and minimum parcel sizes in identified agricultural zoning districts.

However, Napa's Measure J only protects land within certain zoning districts. It does not provide the same anti-sprawl barrier as an urban growth boundary. Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, which tied for second place in the growth management policy area, do have well-established boundaries. Unfortunately, even these allow development on more greenbelt land than is needed for city expansion.

Why do the results matter?
Establishing a growth boundary is the most important action county governments can take to responsibly manage growth and development. The boundary should clearly separate areas appropriate for urbanization from those to be protected as part

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Table 11: **Bay Area County Policy Scores**

	GROWTH MANAGEMENT	OPEN SPACE PROTECTION	AGRICULTURAL ZONING	CONSERVATION PLANNING	TRANSPORTATION CHOICES	TOTAL SCORE
Alameda	75%	60%	60%	55%	80%	66%
Contra Costa	75%	65%	50%	50%	65%	61%
Marin	40%	65%	25%	50%	50%	46%
Napa	90%	0%	50%	65%	0%	41%
San Mateo	0%	70%	85%	40%	70%	53%
Santa Clara	30%	90%	15%	50%	85%	54%
Solano	65%	30%	65%	25%	10%	39%
Sonoma	30%	100%	40%	50%	10%	46%
Regional Average	**51%**	**60%**	**49%**	**48%**	**46%**	**51%**

Bay Area County Smart Growth Policy Scores

SONOMA

46%

NAPA

41%

SOLANO

39%

MARIN

46%

CONTRA COSTA

61%

SAN FRANCISCO

ALAMEDA

66%

SAN MATEO

53%

SANTA CLARA

54%

Score (Percent)

100

50

0

| Alameda | Contra Costa | Marin | Napa | San Mateo | Santa Clara | Solano | Sonoma |

Photo: East Bay Regional Park District
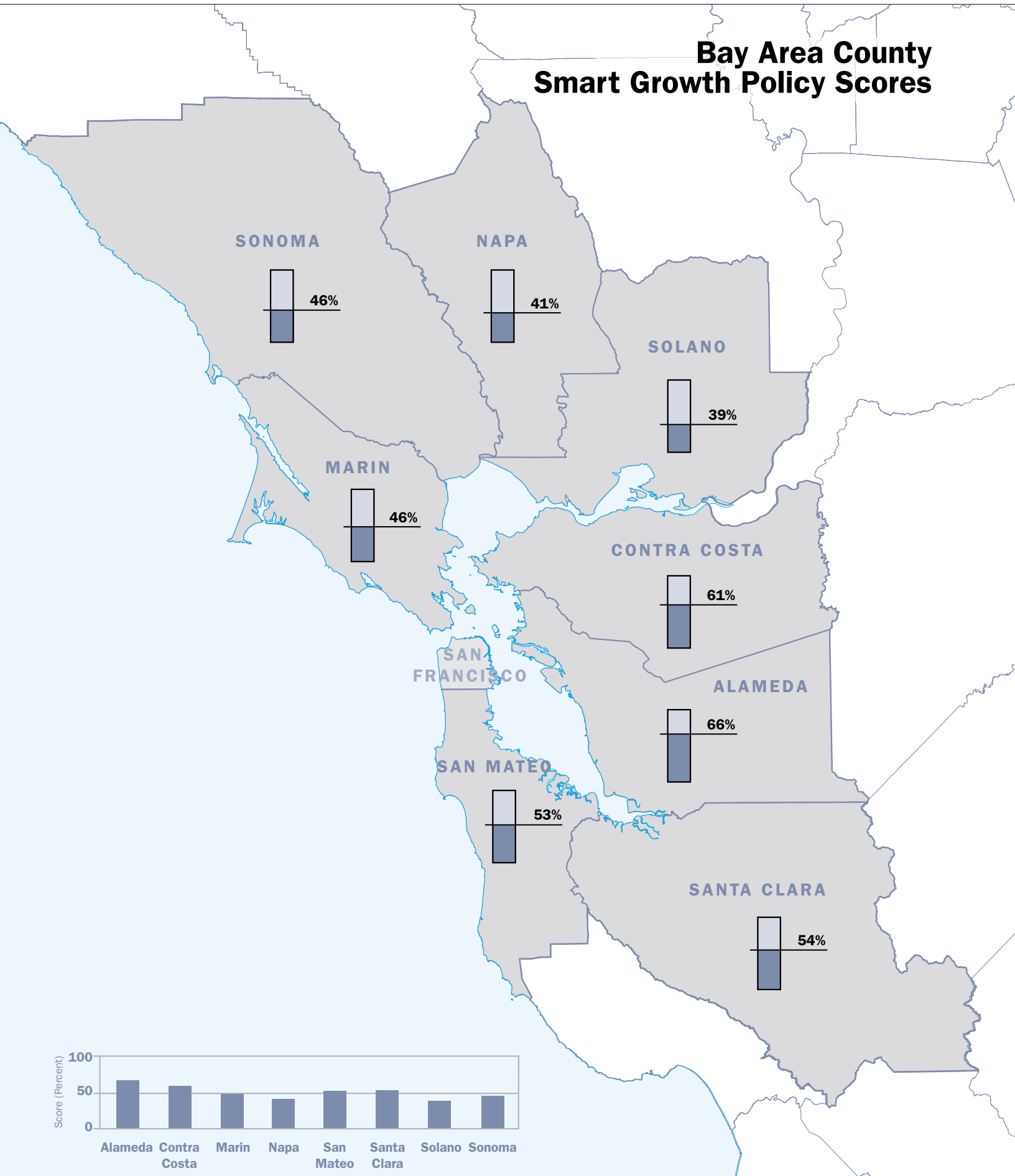
of the region's greenbelt. This halts suburban sprawl and prevents inefficient leap-frog development.

Growth management policies benefit rural and urban residents alike. Agricultural land owners benefit when boundaries create

Table 12: Counties—Growth Management Policies

COUNTY	SCORE
Napa	90%
Alameda	75%
Contra Costa	75%
Solano	65%
Marin	40%
Santa Clara	30%
Sonoma	30%
San Mateo	0%
Regional Average	**51%**

distinct urban and rural sectors. Strong, long-lasting policies reduce speculative pressures in the rural land market, holding down assessed land values and property taxes, and keeping land in farming and ranching.

Three of the low-scoring counties now have opportunities to improve and solidify their growth management policies. Marin County may establish a new environmental corridor in its current countywide general plan update, and Sonoma County's general plan update could strengthen restrictions on land development in its "community separators." Santa Clara County will have a comprehensive growth management ordinance on the 2006 ballot. These opportunities should be used to protect the open space that is so important to the Bay Area's quality of life.

What policies count toward the score?
The growth management policy area measures whether counties have drawn a specific boundary around urbanized areas beyond which development will not occur. Counties with an ordinance or general plan policy to prevent development outside existing urban areas earn the majority of points (value: up to 8 points). Additional points go

Counties can protect scenic landscapes like these by directing development into existing cities and towns.

to counties whose boundaries are defined lines that fully encompass existing urban areas (value: 2 points). This helps ensure that there is no outlet for sprawl.

Urban growth boundaries are stronger, and earn more points, if a vote of the people is required to change them (value: 5 points). Counties also earn more points if the policy cannot expire or change substantially within 20 years (value: 5 points). Short-lived boundary lines may only delay sprawl development, rather than redirecting growth to existing towns and cities.

How committed is the county—insti-tutionally and financially—to the well-planned acquisition of open space, parkland, and farmland conservation easements?

Table 13: **Counties—Open Space Protection Policies**

COUNTY	SCORE
Sonoma	100%
Santa Clara	90%
San Mateo	70%
Contra Costa	65%
Marin	65%
Alameda	60%
Solano	30%
Napa	0%
Regional Average	**60%**

What are the results?
Sonoma County earns 100%, the only perfect score of any county in any policy area (Table 13). The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District dedicated over $30 million in sales tax revenue to acquiring land and easements for 6,541 acres of natural areas and farmlands in 2005 alone. Sonoma outspends even the more urbanized Bay Area counties, which tend to have higher tax revenues to spend on open space.

Sonoma County is also a model because it preserves agricultural lands in addition to parklands. In addition, it uses a geographic infor-mation system (GIS) to prioritize new land acquisitions in four categories: agriculture, recreation, natural resources, and greenbelts. This broad focus and thoughtful strategic plan-ning make the district very effective.

Santa Clara, San Mateo, Marin, Contra Costa, and Alameda Counties are all part of successful open space protection districts as well. These counties' scores are high, but not as high as Sonoma's, largely

because—with the exception of Santa Clara—their districts protect only parkland, not farmland. They also they have not dedicated as much funding to open space acquisition.

Only two counties in the Bay Area—Solano and Napa—have no public authority for open space acquisition and preservation. Solano County scores 30%. It has a Regional Parks Division that works with other agencies to make land publicly accessible, but the non-profit Solano Land Trust acquires most new land titles and easements in the county.

Napa County earns a score of 0%, with no parks department, no open space district, and no funding for open space, parklands, and agricul-tural preservation. Napa County may address this major gap with a ballot measure in 2006 to establish and fund a new Napa Open Space District.

a regional greenbelt. The greenbelt provides recreational opportunities and spectacular scenery, improving the entire region's quality of life.

The *Scorecard* measures counties' efforts to acquire and preserve parklands, open space, and farm-lands. The responsibility for planning, acquiring, and managing almost all public open space in the Bay Area falls to county governments and special districts such as the East Bay Regional Park District.

What policies count toward the score?
Counties are more effective at land conservation when they have a special district for preserving open space (value: 7 points) and/or farmland (value: 3 points). As separate governing bodies, special purpose districts can directly seek voter funding and do not have to

Counties are most effective at protecting open space and farmland when they are part of open space districts, independent public agencies that fund the purchase and management of land.

Photo: East Bay Regional Park District

Why do the results matter?
Land acquisition and preservation is critical to the region's future. Open lands support wildlife, prevent flooding, and clean the Bay Area's air and water. The permanent preserva-tion of these lands knits parks, open spaces, and agriculture into

compete with other county depart-ments for funding. Counties can also have a parks department or branch of county government that acts to acquire, preserve, operate, and maintain parklands or open spaces (value: 1 point).

The *Scorecard* measures the amount of money spent to acquire parkland as a rough measure of the resources each county dedicates to protecting the greenbelt. Counties receive points based on the total amount of money dedicated per year by all public agencies and districts to the acquisition of land or easements for any type of open space or farmland (value: up to 6 points).

Counties receive additional points if any local open space agency has a detailed land acquisition plan (value: 3 points). Good planning and prioritizing for land acquisitions is essential to ensure that each public dollar spent has maximum benefit.

③ Preserving Agricultural Land
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 20

How well do the county's agricultural zoning ordinances protect prime agricultural land from being converted to non-agricultural uses and being fragmented by development?

What are the results?
Most Bay Area counties could dramatically improve their agricultural zoning ordinances to better protect the region's prime agricultural lands.

Table 14:
Counties—Agricultural Zoning Policies

COUNTY	SCORE
San Mateo	85%
Solano	65%
Alameda	60%
Contra Costa	50%
Napa	50%
Sonoma	40%
Marin	25%
Santa Clara	15%
Regional Average	**49%**

Considering only counties' most stringent farmland protections, the average regional score is 49% (Table 14); counties could double the strength of their agricultural protection. Three of eight counties—Santa Clara, Marin, and Sonoma—score less than 50%.

Bay Area counties are making it too easy to convert their best farmland to non-agricultural uses. Four counties—Marin, Napa, Santa Clara, and San Mateo—allow non-residential, non-agricultural uses on agricultural land automatically. Unfortunately, every other county also allows these uses, but with a special permit. Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, and Sonoma Counties also allow addi-

tional housing units on agricultural land with a special permit.

Fragmentation also poses a serious threat to farmland. Agricultural zoning ordinances in Santa Clara County leave prime farmland vulnerable by allowing parcel sizes of one residence per 20 acres. Sonoma and Marin Counties allow one residence per 60 acres. Even where parcel sizes are relatively large with land in agricultural use today, these permissive ordinances make subdivision and sprawl development on agricultural lands a latent threat.

In San Mateo County, only one residential unit can be built for every 160 acres of prime farmland, the lowest allowable development density of any agricultural zone in the Bay Area. With its unique farmland protection ordinance, San Mateo scored 85% to lead all counties in this policy area. In San Mateo's rigorous but flexible density-credit system, authorities designate agricultural parcel sizes and allocate density credits after a detailed on-site evaluation. Each density credit permits one house or, since water is a limiting factor, a commercial or institutional land use that requires the same amount of water. The density credit gives flexibility and certainty to property owners, and the site analysis protects valuable farmland.

Why do the results matter?
Farmland is a crucial part of the Bay Area's greenbelt. Preserving farmland helps ensure that farming and ranching remain an important part of the Bay Area economy and that people can continue to enjoy the bountiful produce of the region. When residents buy their food from local producers, they get cheaper,

To support working farms, counties can prohibit inappropriate development on farmland and require large parcel sizes to prevent subdivision.

Photo: Jessica Aloft

fresher food, and they strengthen the regional economy.

The agricultural provisions of a county's zoning ordinance influence the economic viability of agriculture and help determine whether ranchlands and farmlands remain in productive use. The conversion of prime agricultural land into industrial or commercial uses encourages future sprawl. This includes the development of restaurants, hotels, and event centers, often connected to winery businesses, on prime agricultural land. Also of concern are industrial uses, like landfills and airstrips, and traditionally urban land uses, like large churches and hospitals. These activities need appropriate locations that do not place them on the region's most productive farmland.

Alarmingly, the three counties that are weakest in agricultural zoning—Marin, Santa Clara, and Sonoma—also have some of the weakest growth management policies. This leaves farmland vulnerable to sprawl development. (The other county with a low growth management score—San Mateo—is fortunately the best protector of at least a core of high-quality farmland.) Marin County's low score is particularly surprising, given its identity as an important farming and ranching area. In Marin, there is enormous popular support for preserving working farms and farmland; however, that support is not locked in with strong policies. In all three counties, farmland may be lost without stronger agricultural protections and growth management policies.

What policies count toward the score?
Most counties have three or four agricultural zoning districts; this measure compares counties' most restrictive agricultural zones.

To examine the extent to which farmland is protected from conversion to industrial or commercial uses,

the *Scorecard* considers whether counties prohibit non-residential, non-recreational, non-agricultural uses, allowing them neither by right (value: 3 points) nor by special permit (value: 3 points).

The agricultural zoning policy area also measures whether counties discourage residential fragmentation of farmland. The measure of this is the density of houses allowed by right, or the required minimum parcel size divided by the number of residential units allowed (value: up to 11 points), not including guest units or farmworker housing. Additional points go to counties that do not allow additional home development in prime farmland areas by special permit (value: 3 points).

④ Conserving Natural Resources
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 20

Does the county have adequate policies to protect its natural resources, particularly its creeks, trees, and steep hillsides?

Table 15: **Counties—Natural Resource Conservation Policies**

COUNTY	SCORE
Napa	65%
Alameda	55%
Contra Costa	50%
Marin	50%
Santa Clara	50%
Sonoma	50%
San Mateo	40%
Solano	25%
Regional Average	**48%**

What are the results?
Most Bay Area counties have some policies to protect creeks, trees, and hillsides. Counties' scores cluster around the regional average of 48% (Table 15), with no county emerging as a clear leader. Counties should do much more to strengthen these important conservation policies by enacting strong, specific ordinances.

Of seven counties with general plan statements or ordinances about protecting creeks, only four create riparian buffer zones throughout the county. Of six counties with statements or ordinances to protect trees, only three require permits for cutting trees on public and private lands. Of seven counties with statements about protecting hillsides, only four—Marin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Solano—have a formula to lessen development as slope increases, and only Napa prevents all development on the steepest slopes.

Napa County has the best policies in the region, though it still only earns a score of 65%. In 1991, Napa County adopted a Conservation Regulations ordinance, establishing erosion controls and streamside development setbacks to reduce soil loss, improve water quality, and preserve riparian areas and other habitat. Napa County considers slope in its stream setback requirements and bans all development on steep slopes.

The weakness in Napa County's conservation policies is its lack of a tree or woodland protection ordinance. Santa Clara, Marin, and San Mateo Counties all require permits for the removal of any significant or native tree on public or private property. Marin County's ordinance also calls for an educational outreach program to enhance tree protections.

Solano County has the weakest conservation policies of all Bay Area counties, scoring only 25%. To fully protect its habitat and landscapes for this and future generations, Solano County should institute stream buffer zones, a tree protection ordinance, and development restrictions for steep slopes and hillsides.

For additional model policies, Bay Area counties should look to coastal programs, which include strong protections for native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Counties can set out strong, specific protections for creeks, trees, and hillsides, to prevent flooding and erosion and maintain water quality and other natural resources.

Why do the results matter?
County governments oversee large amounts of land that help provide clean air, clean water, habitat, and erosion and flood prevention.

The conservation policy area considers counties' policies regarding three natural resources. Creeks and the flood zones that surround them are vital habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Stream buffers upstream let water wash across a wide floodplain, reducing flood-ing downstream. Undeveloped floodplains also clean water before it enters the stream. Native trees and woodlands provide scenic views, stabilize hillsides, and maintain local ecological systems. Hillsides provide the region's unique scenic landscapes, while development on hillsides can contribute to erosion and flooding.

Each county should pass specific laws to make their good intentions a reality, and ensure that healthy creeks, trees, and soils continue to sustain the Bay Area's scenery and ecological health.

What policies count toward the score?
Counties receive points if they protect streams and their adjacent riparian habitat in zoning ordinances (value: 4 points) or general plan policies

(value: 2 points). The most effective policies are zoning ordinances that prohibit development in stream buffer zones, so additional points reward counties for the width of this buffer (value: up to 6 points).

Counties often have either an ordinance or general plan policy to protect native trees or woodlands (value: 1 point). These ordinances should require permits for the removal of protected trees on both public and private lands (value: 4 points); some require permits only for cutting public trees (value: 2 points), while others require no permits, but do require mitigation on private lands (value: 2 points).

County policies should limit develop-ment on steep slopes and hillsides (value: 2 points), especially the steepest slopes. Here, counties can earn points for limiting development with a slope-density formula (value: 1 point) or for partially or fully prohibiting development on slope gradients of 25% or higher (value: 3 or 5 points). These policies ensure that the steepest slopes and hillsides in the region remain largely undevel-oped, scenic, and stable.

5 Offering Transportation Choices
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 20

Has the county passed a sales tax, or other taxes, to finance transportation improvements? If so, is the county using this spending to improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation choices, rather than spending it on roads and highways? Does the county have a program to fund transit-oriented development?

What are the results?
The region's nine counties vary widely in their commitment to trans-portation choices, leaving frustrated commuters lamenting the lack of coordination among Bay Area transit agencies. The average county score is 46% (Table 16), but most counties score on a lower or higher end of the spectrum. The highest-performing counties have significant transporta-tion funding and also spend a large percentage of that funding on transit.

Table 16: **Counties—Transportation Choices Policies**

COUNTY	SCORE
Santa Clara	85%
Alameda	80%
San Mateo	70%
Contra Costa	65%
Marin	50%
Sonoma	10%
Solano	10%
Napa	0%
Regional Average	**46%**

Santa Clara County leads the way in overall performance, scoring 85% with a total of 1.5 cents per dollar in sales taxes. Thanks to the 2000 renewal of Measure A, all revenues from a half-cent sales tax go to transit—a sharp improvement in county priorities from the road and highway expansion funding of the 1980s. Santa Clara County also has Measure B, a half-cent sales tax that allocates a significant percentage of its revenue to transit.

Three other counties scored at least 60%—Alameda (80%), San Mateo (70%), and Contra Costa (65%). Each levies a permanent one-half cent sales tax to fund BART and local transit. A small, voter-approved property tax also funds bus and rail services in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties' AC Transit District.

After Santa Clara County, the counties that spend the highest proportion of funds on transit are San Mateo and Alameda. Contra Costa balances its main transportation sales tax roughly in thirds between transit, highways, and other expenditures, but its additional taxes increase the amount that goes to transit. Marin County spends 55% of its transportation sales tax on transit, but has no other local tax to supplement that. Sonoma has enacted a roads-heavy sales tax plan, with a total of only 15% for local and regional transit.

The counties with the least dedication to transportation choices are Solano and Napa. These counties are largely auto-dependent today and have only limited connections to the regional transit network. In both counties voters defeated transportation sales-tax measures in the June 2006 election, missing an opportunity to increase the transportation options offered to residents.

Why do the results matter?
While federal and state policies play a role, counties make the local transportation decisions that shape the pattern of local growth and development. Counties' transportation priorities affect how people across the Bay Area reach jobs, schools, hospitals, recreation, and shopping. It is possible to predict what choices travelers will have in 2016 or even 2026 by examining a county's bal-

Counties can give their residents transportation choices and help reduce traffic by directing significant funding to transit.

ance of investment between highways and other alternatives.

The fact that some counties have strong transportation policies while others score poorly explains regional commuters' frustration with navigating the transit system. Counties with low transit spending undermine the entire regional transportation network. If public transit stops at county lines that people need to cross, they have no choice but to drive. Strengthening the transportation policies of low-scoring counties should be a regionwide priority.

What policies count toward the score?
County transportation policies were scored on the size of counties' transportation sales taxes (value: up to 2 points), how much of that funding is spent on transit (value: up to 8 points), and how much is not spent on highways (value: up to 3 points).

Counties can levy additional local taxes to fund transportation (value:

1 point). Higher scores go to counties that dedicate all or most of these additional revenues to public transit (value: up to 4 points).

One goal of smart transportation policy is to facilitate the creation of compact development near regional rail, bus, and ferry terminals and stations. Certain counties have specifically dedicated a share of their revenues to fund transit-oriented development (value: 2 points for sales tax, 1 point for other).

County Scorecard Analysis
No single factor explains why some counties are doing better than other counties in adopting strong smart growth county policies. Evaluating the scores against three factors—population, growth rate, and amount of land at risk of sprawl development—reveals that demographics and geography do not influence scores. Counties' high or low scores are due entirely to deliberate policy decisions.

Combined City and County Analysis

The Bay Area is not doing well. Overall, the region is doing just one-third of what it needs to do to achieve smart growth. Clearly, there is a great deal of room for improvement in ensuring that growth happens responsibly throughout the region.

Examining the progress of cities and counties together (Tables 17 and 18) provides an overall picture of the region's strengths and weaknesses, and how the incomplete patchwork of smart growth policies could shape the regional landscape.

San Francisco was evaluated as a city, not a county, and so is not included in the following analysis.

Table 17: Average City Policy Performance By County

	CITIES IN ALAMEDA COUNTY		CITIES IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY		CITIES IN MARIN COUNTY		CITIES IN NAPA COUNTY		CITIES IN SAN MATEO COUNTY		CITIES IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY		CITIES IN SOLANO COUNTY		CITIES IN SONOMA COUNTY		SAN FRANCISCO	BAY AREA AVERAGE CITIES
	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	SCORE
Growth Boundaries	41%	3	7%	7	14%	6	36%	4	5%	8	41%	2	26%	5	85%	1	na	29%
Park Proximity	19%	5	22%	4	8%	8	18%	6	14%	7	53%	2	65%	1	39%	3	0%	27%
Affordable Housing	54%	3	29%	5	41%	4	63%	1	23%	7	25%	6	16%	8	61%	2	68%	36%
Mixed-Use Development	88%	2	83%	3	80%	5	91%	1	67%	8	76%	6	74%	7	80%	4	100%	79%
Development Density	48%	1	25%	6	15%	8	33%	2	28%	4	30%	3	20%	7	26%	5	50%	29%
Reduced Parking Requirements	28%	3	26%	4	23%	7	30%	2	24%	6	20%	8	26%	5	36%	1	68%	26%
Development Standards	35%	3	33%	5	21%	7	57%	1	20%	8	30%	6	34%	4	55%	2	13%	32%
Total	**42%**	**2**	**30%**	**6**	**27%**	**7**	**39%**	**3**	**25%**	**8**	**37%**	**4**	**35%**	**5**	**51%**	**1**	**49%**	**34%**

Table 18: County Policy Performance

	ALAMEDA COUNTY		CONTRA COSTA COUNTY		MARIN COUNTY		NAPA COUNTY		SAN MATEO COUNTY		SANTA CLARA COUNTY		SOLANO COUNTY		SONOMA COUNTY		SAN FRANCISCO	BAY AREA AVERAGE COUNTIES
	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK	–	SCORE
Growth Management	75%	2	75%	3	40%	5	90%	1	0%	8	30%	6*	65%	4	30%	6*	–	51%
Open Space Preservation	60%	6	65%	4	65%	5	0%	8	70%	3	90%	2	30%	7	100%	1	–	60%
Agricultural Zoning	60%	3	50%	4*	25%	7	50%	4*	85%	1	15%	8	65%	2	40%	6	–	49%
Conservation Planning	55%	2	50%	3*	50%	3*	65%	1	40%	7	50%	3*	25%	8	50%	3*	–	48%
Transportation Choices	80%	2	65%	4	50%	5	0%	8	70%	3	85%	1	10%	6*	10%	6*	–	46%
Total score	**66%**	**1**	**61%**	**2**	**46%**	**5***	**41%**	**7**	**53%**	**4**	**54%**	**3**	**39%**	**8**	**46%**	**5***	**–**	**51%**

* Tied for this rank

Sonoma County cities score higher on average than any other county's cities. Four Sonoma cities—Petaluma, Santa Rosa, Windsor, and Rohnert Park—place in the top 10. Every city except Cloverdale has an urban growth boundary. Some of Sonoma's cities are also doing well at reducing parking and requiring good development standards. However, these efforts would be much more effective at creating walkable downtowns if these cities were doing more to encourage density.

Although the cities' urban growth boundaries protect Sonoma County's open space, the county's policies do not. The county's ability to approve large-scale winery facilities and ranchette development threatens Sonoma's agricultural lands. Greenbelt Alliance's report, *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, found that Sonoma County has 88,300 acres at risk of sprawl development, the second-highest acreage at risk (after Solano) of all Bay Area counties. Sonoma County's open space district is doing well at acquiring land and easements, but inadequate agriculture and growth management policies miss many less expensive opportunities to protect the county's greenbelt.

Sonoma County should also focus on transportation. More of its Measure M quarter-cent transportation sales tax is devoted to highway spending than any other county, and less is devoted to public transit. A much-needed step toward smart growth would be for cities and the county to build high-density development around transit stops with newly expanded service.

Marin and Sonoma Counties

City and county smart growth policies in Marin County are among the weakest in the region. Marin County's policies tie for 5th out of eight counties. As a group, Marin County cities rank 7th out of eight when compared to the average city group scores of other Bay Area counties. Only one of the eligible cities—Novato—has an urban growth boundary, and its cities score particularly low on encouraging density.

Marin County's two largest cities are doing better than the rest. San Rafael ranks 9th place of the region's 101 cities; it allows mixed-use development and is doing relatively well at requiring parks to be near residents. Novato is doing almost as well overall, and unlike San Rafael, has a strong, voter-adopted urban growth boundary.

Marin County's growth management and agricultural zoning policies are below average, making rural sprawl a real threat. This is a surprise for a county that has done so well at preserving working farms; it indicates that residents' clear commitment to preserving farms and farmland has not been locked in with strong policies. That leaves Marin's agricultural lands vulnerable.

The primary challenge for Marin County and its cities is to make a real commitment to creating homes that are affordable to all its residents and workers. Without supporting more dense, walkable downtowns that include a range of housing options, Marin's cities will continue to squeeze new growth outward, paving the greenbelt, worsening traffic, and making Marin and neighboring counties less pleasant places to live.

tural zoning policies in the region, and its Orderly Growth Initiative helps guide growth into cities, but without an open space district or significant transit funding, it falls behind other counties.

Compounding this, Solano County cities have some of the weakest density policies in the region and only two Solano cities—Benicia and Fairfield—have urban growth boundaries. Greenbelt Alliance's *At Risk* report found that Solano County has 93,300 acres at risk of sprawl development, more than any other Bay Area county. These fast-growing cities, now a sprawl threat, also present an opportunity: if they act now to adopt smart growth policies, they could take the county—and the entire region—toward a much more livable future.

Napa and Solano Counties

Napa and Solano County's smart growth scores are the lowest of all Bay Area counties. They are the only two counties without open space districts to acquire and manage land and make parks available to residents. They are also the only two counties that lack transportation sales taxes, leaving residents heavily reliant on cars. Both Napa and Solano Counties had transportation sales-tax measures defeated in the 2006 election. Napa County is moving toward the creation of an open space district.

Napa County's cities have relatively good smart growth policies, scoring third overall, and the City of Napa was the third-highest scoring of all Bay Area cities. Napa County cities generally are taking steps to enact affordable housing standards, promote mixed-use development, and regulate development to promote pedestrian-friendly cities. However, like all Bay Area cities, they have considerable room for improvement.

Three of five Napa County cities lack urban growth boundaries: American Canyon, Calistoga, and Yountville. Growth pressures around American Canyon are particularly serious, and could significantly affect the landscape at the south end of the county.

Napa County, however, has the best growth management policies of any county, with strong protections against sprawl development and subdivision of agricultural land. Napa County's 1991 Conservation Regulations ordinance is also notable for its strong creek and hillside protections.

At 39%, Solano County has the lowest overall score of any county. It does have the second-best agricul-

In Contra Costa County, the passage in 2004 of Measure J, a transportation sales tax, strengthened the county's transportation planning policies, with good support for transit-oriented development.

With an average score of 30%, cities' performance in Contra Costa is weak. Walnut Creek is the county's best-performing city, placing 17th in the region for its better-than-average mixed-use development and development standards policies. Its policies on density and parking, though still in need of improvement, are also above average. In general, Contra Costa's cities—especially those to the east—lack effective urban growth boundaries, putting thousands of acres of lands at risk of sprawl development. City policies on affordable housing, density, and park proximity also need strengthening to put Contra Costa on the path of smart growth.

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

While every Bay Area county has significant room for improvement, with average scores of 66% and 61% respectively, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties are furthest along the path toward smart growth. In both Alameda and Contra Costa County, the cities need improvement.

Alameda County's growth management was strengthened by Measure D, passed by voters in 2000, which established a countywide urban growth boundary and prevented the subdivision of ranchland. Alameda County also is doing well at providing transportation options, with significant transportation funding—a large portion of which it spends on transit—enabling its residents to travel without needing cars.

Some Alameda County cities are doing relatively well compared to other cities in the region. Pleasanton, Hayward, and Livermore are Alameda's top city scorers, placing 6th, 15th, and 16th regionwide.

To complement Alameda County's investments in transit and the reduced need for residents to drive, the county's cities should be reducing their parking requirements. On this measure, the average city score is just 28%; when cities are grouped by county, the cities in Alameda County rank third of eight. Cities are also not doing enough to ensure that parks are close to residents, a key element in making its denser western cities more livable. Overall, however, Alameda County's high-density development and strong transportation system are a good start toward smart growth.

Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

Both the county and cities of San Mateo have the region's weakest growth management policies. San Mateo is the only county to allow urban development on the rural side of the rural-urban boundary, and only one of 15 eligible cities—Half Moon Bay—has an urban growth boundary.

San Mateo County is doing well at acquiring open space for permanent protection, and it has a model ordinance to protect prime agriculture lands. But the county's weak growth management and conservation policies leave other greenbelt areas, especially creeks and hillsides throughout the county, poorly protected from inappropriate development.

San Mateo's cities, on average, had the lowest scores in the region, with an overall score of 25%. The county's top-scoring city was the City of San Mateo, which ranked 18th regionwide. Smart growth should begin with cities, which should encourage good infill development with guidelines for pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development. San Mateo's cities are also in serious need of stronger policies to create homes that are affordable to local residents and workers.

Santa Clara County is doing fairly well across the board, placing third of the eight counties. Its open space protection and transportation policies are strong. However, with weak agricultural zoning and growth management policies, the greenbelt is still at risk.

Cities in Santa Clara are doing well in some areas, and the region's second-highest scoring city is San Jose. Though most cities in the county are very different from San Jose, some do have urban growth boundaries, and several do have park proximity policies.

Santa Clara's cities share many of the weaknesses of San Mateo's cities. Because only half of Santa Clara's eligible cities have urban growth boundaries, sprawl at city edges also threatens Santa Clara's open space. Santa Clara cities have some of the weakest affordable housing policies in the region. These cities are also doing little to promote mixed-use development, reduce parking requirements, or create standards for good development; these are all key policies for creating vibrant downtowns.

San Jose, with the second highest overall score, is a major exception to otherwise weak performance by Santa Clara cities. San Jose, with its voter-adopted urban growth boundary, and the county's other relatively strong performers, Mountain View and Morgan Hill, could serve as good examples for other cities around the county.

Conclusion

Cities and counties throughout the region face choices about how to encourage growth while protecting open space and ensuring that the region's quality of life stays high. The *Smart Growth Scorecard* assesses how well each jurisdiction is doing now, and offers examples of cities and counties to learn from.

Today, the Bay Area's overall smart growth scores are low. But in each policy area, there is at least one city or county that can guide others toward smarter growth.

Strong smart growth policies exist in cities and counties large and small, distant and central, and with ample or minimal resources. Ultimately, local elected leaders and city and county planners determine how well a city is doing at putting policies in place to achieve smart growth. Local residents can also influence how well their city or county is doing by letting elected leaders know they want better-protected open space and more livable communities.

The *Smart Growth Scorecard*'s goal is to help cities and counties adopt a comprehensive set of policies that will create compact, vibrant communities surrounded by a protected greenbelt. Success will mean a great place to live for current and future generations.

Photo: Steve Price, www.urban-advantage.com

Today, overall, Bay Area cities and counties are doing only a fraction of what they should do to make the region's communities better places to live. But the region has many good examples; cities and counties can learn from one another to achieve smart growth.

Photo: Galen Rowell/Mountain Light

The Bay Area is famous for its beautiful setting and its high quality of life. To keep the region's quality of life high as its population grows, cities and counties must adopt stronger policies to guide growth. The result will be cities that are better places to live, surrounded by open space all residents can enjoy.

Appendix:
Scores of All Bay Area Cities

Table 19: **Bay Area City Policy Scores**

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Alameda County											
Alameda	N/A	0%	68%	93%	33%	15%	15%	37%	47	Exempt	
Albany	N/A	0%	55%	100%	78%	18%	28%	44%	31	Exempt	
Berkeley	N/A	0%	73%	85%	40%	70%	15%	47%	25	Exempt	
Dublin	98%	0%	55%	100%	53%	10%	23%	48%	21		
Emeryville	N/A	0%	48%	85%	45%	23%	13%	35%	49	Exempt	
Fremont	0%	0%	60%	85%	78%	35%	50%	40%	39		
Hayward	73%	0%	60%	100%	63%	48%	20%	52%	15		
Livermore	100%	0%	38%	100%	48%	30%	80%	50%	16		
Newark	0%	88%	75%	85%	50%	4%	9%	44%	32		Exempt
Oakland	0%	0%	38%	100%	45%	65%	80%	42%	35		
Piedmont	N/A	0%	0%	85%	5%	0%	12%	12%	96	Exempt	Exempt
Pleasanton	98%	88%	75%	50%	45%	30%	43%	58%	6		
San Leandro	0%	88%	63%	85%	20%	18%	50%	43%	34		
Union City	0%	0%	50%	85%	70%	25%	48%	36%	48		
Average Score	**41%**	**19%**	**54%**	**88%**	**48%**	**28%**	**35%**	**42%**			
Contra Costa County											
Antioch	0%	0%	0%	85%	35%	33%	28%	26%	69		
Brentwood	0%	0%	73%	100%	20%	10%	30%	31%	56		
Clayton	0%	0%	60%	100%	10%	31%	29%	28%	63		Exempt
Concord	0%	0%	55%	85%	75%	5%	10%	31%	55		
Danville	0%	0%	53%	0%	18%	15%	15%	14%	89		
El Cerrito	N/A	0%	0%	100%	25%	25%	25%	28%	64	Exempt	
Hercules	0%	0%	33%	100%	35%	45%	53%	38%	43		
Lafayette	0%	65%	0%	85%	18%	38%	28%	33%	52		
Martinez	N/A	0%	0%	50%	3%	50%	45%	22%	77	Exempt	
Moraga	0%	0%	13%	85%	5%	12%	9%	13%	92		Exempt
Oakley	0%	98%	13%	100%	20%	8%	50%	35%	50		Exempt
Orinda	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	10%	43%	10%	98		
Pinole	0%	0%	0%	100%	15%	42%	38%	17%	84		Exempt
Pittsburg	0%	88%	50%	100%	30%	53%	35%	48%	21		
Pleasant Hill	N/A	0%	60%	85%	35%	15%	8%	34%	51	Exempt	
Richmond	0%	88%	55%	100%	35%	40%	23%	49%	20		
San Pablo	N/A	0%	13%	100%	10%	19%	38%	24%	74	Exempt	Exempt
San Ramon	98%	88%	0%	93%	28%	3%	35%	46%	26		

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Walnut Creek	N/A	0%	73%	100%	40%	43%	85%	50%	17	Exempt	
Average Score	**7%**	**22%**	**29%**	**83%**	**25%**	**26%**	**33%**	**30%**			

Marin County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Belvedere	N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100	Exempt	Exempt
Corte Madera	N/A	0%	88%	50%	8%	15%	15%	28%	60	Exempt	
Fairfax	0%	0%	13%	85%	10%	8%	9%	13%	92		Exempt
Larkspur	0%	0%	63%	100%	8%	28%	30%	30%	58		
Mill Valley	N/A	0%	45%	85%	15%	15%	18%	28%	60	Exempt	
Novato	100%	0%	80%	100%	20%	48%	58%	55%	12		
Ross	N/A	0%	0%	85%	10%	39%	12%	17%	85	Exempt	Exempt
San Anselmo	0%	0%	33%	85%	10%	15%	27%	18%	83		Exempt
San Rafael	0%	88%	80%	100%	55%	48%	35%	56%	9		
Sausalito	0%	0%	0%	100%	15%	10%	23%	21%	78		
Tiburon	0%	0%	50%	85%	13%	25%	10%	26%	67		
Average Score	**14%**	**8%**	**41%**	**80%**	**15%**	**23%**	**21%**	**27%**			

Napa County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
American Canyon	0%	0%	55%	100%	20%	15%	44%	24%	73		Exempt
Calistoga	0%	0%	60%	85%	15%	19%	65%	27%	66		Exempt
Napa	100%	88%	65%	100%	38%	55%	60%	65%	3		
St. Helena	80%	0%	80%	85%	40%	15%	41%	44%	30		Exempt
Yountville	0%	0%	55%	85%	50%	42%	74%	32%	54		Exempt
Average Score	**36%**	**18%**	**63%**	**91%**	**33%**	**30%**	**57%**	**39%**			

San Francisco County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
San Francisco	N/A	0%	68%	100%	50%	68%	13%	49%	19	Exempt	
Average Score	**N/A**	**0%**	**68%**	**100%**	**50%**	**68%**	**13%**	**49%**			

San Mateo County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Atherton	N/A	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	3%	99	Exempt	
Belmont	0%	0%	13%	93%	20%	18%	25%	23%	76		
Brisbane	0%	0%	13%	85%	50%	33%	15%	28%	62		
Burlingame	N/A	0%	33%	85%	40%	18%	18%	30%	57	Exempt	
Colma	N/A	0%	25%	85%	20%	10%	43%	27%	65	Exempt	
Daly City	0%	0%	0%	43%	23%	33%	0%	14%	90		
East Palo Alto	0%	0%	63%	0%	20%	15%	18%	17%	86		Exempt
Foster City	0%	0%	0%	85%	55%	12%	9%	16%	87		Exempt

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Half Moon Bay	73%	0%	63%	85%	10%	31%	18%	37%	45		Exempt
Hillsborough	N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	100	Exempt	
Menlo Park	0%	0%	35%	85%	10%	25%	8%	23%	75		
Millbrae	N/A	88%	13%	88%	38%	28%	43%	46%	28	Exempt	
Pacifica	0%	0%	0%	85%	15%	20%	38%	20%	80		
Portola Valley	0%	85%	45%	0%	15%	0%	0%	25%	70		Exempt
Redwood City	0%	0%	13%	93%	28%	33%	23%	25%	71		
San Bruno	0%	0%	0%	93%	35%	33%	15%	24%	72		
San Carlos	0%	0%	50%	100%	45%	43%	38%	38%	43		
San Mateo	0%	98%	35%	100%	45%	48%	45%	49%	18		
South San Francisco	0%	0%	53%	93%	50%	70%	40%	41%	36		
Woodside	0%	0%	0%	50%	25%	8%	8%	13%	94		
Average Score	**5%**	**14%**	**23%**	**67%**	**28%**	**24%**	**20%**	**25%**			

Santa Clara County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Campbell	N/A	88%	0%	100%	15%	20%	23%	41%	38	Exempt	
Cupertino	73%	88%	60%	43%	13%	3%	23%	41%	37		
Gilroy	73%	88%	25%	100%	10%	23%	3%	45%	29		
Los Altos	0%	0%	0%	85%	60%	8%	44%	18%	82		Exempt
Los Altos Hills	0%	88%	0%	0%	8%	0%	8%	15%	88		
Los Gatos	0%	0%	45%	85%	5%	0%	18%	20%	81		
Milpitas	98%	98%	0%	93%	53%	15%	25%	53%	13		
Monte Sereno	70%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	95		Exempt
Morgan Hill	83%	88%	0%	100%	43%	40%	58%	56%	10		
Mountain View	N/A	88%	60%	100%	38%	23%	60%	57%	8	Exempt	
Palo Alto	0%	88%	60%	93%	35%	33%	38%	48%	21		
San Jose	100%	88%	25%	93%	73%	73%	63%	69%	2		
Santa Clara	N/A	0%	45%	85%	20%	10%	33%	29%	59	Exempt	
Saratoga	0%	0%	0%	85%	15%	27%	9%	14%	91		Exempt
Sunnyvale	0%	0%	55%	85%	70%	25%	48%	39%	42		
Average Score	**41%**	**53%**	**25%**	**76%**	**30%**	**20%**	**30%**	**37%**			

Solano County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	Overall RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Benicia	93%	88%	48%	93%	8%	25%	18%	53%	13		
Dixon	0%	0%	0%	50%	10%	10%	5%	11%	97		
Fairfield	93%	88%	13%	43%	18%	60%	38%	46%	26		
Rio Vista	0%	98%	38%	100%	20%	4%	53%	39%	41		Exempt
Suisun City	0%	98%	0%	85%	10%	23%	48%	37%	46		
Vacaville	0%	88%	0%	50%	18%	20%	35%	26%	67		

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Vallejo	0%	0%	13%	100%	58%	38%	40%	33%	53		
Average Score	**26%**	**65%**	**16%**	**74%**	**20%**	**26%**	**34%**	**35%**			

Sonoma County

CITY	Growth Boundaries SCORE	Park Proximity SCORE	Affordable Housing SCORE	Mixed-Use Devel. SCORE	Devel. Density SCORE	Reduced Parking Requirements SCORE	Devel. Standards SCORE	Overall SCORE	RANK	GROWTH EXEMPT?	TRANSIT EXEMPT?
Cloverdale	0%	0%	55%	38%	10%	20%	40%	21%	79		
Cotati	98%	0%	75%	80%	20%	35%	35%	47%	24		
Healdsburg	88%	0%	58%	50%	15%	48%	30%	40%	40		
Petaluma	100%	98%	58%	100%	38%	58%	48%	70%	1		
Rohnert Park	95%	88%	75%	88%	15%	23%	50%	58%	7		
Santa Rosa	98%	88%	58%	88%	50%	50%	50%	65%	3		
Sebastopol	90%	0%	65%	100%	45%	48%	73%	55%	11		
Sonoma	100%	0%	53%	75%	10%	27%	82%	44%	32		Exempt
Windsor	100%	75%	55%	100%	30%	20%	90%	61%	5		
Average Score	**85%**	**39%**	**61%**	**80%**	**26%**	**36%**	**55%**	**51%**			